

Learning about

# PARAKEETS / BUDGIES





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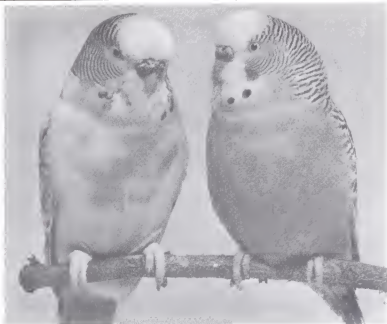
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**Parakeets are small, attractive birds which were sometimes incorrectly called "lovebirds" because they often sit close together.**

### **THE DESIRABILITY OF PET PARAKEETS**

There are many different parakeet species in the world. One of them is popularly called the Australian shell parakeet or just plain parakeet for short. This same bird is also often referred to as the budgerigar or budgie, those names being corruptions of the name given the bird by Australian aborigines. In any event, the names Australian shell parakeet and parakeet and budgerigar and budgie are all commonly used names for the small Australian parrot known to science as *Melopsittacus undulatus*, and we'll use them interchangeably in this book.

Some bird fanciers rate the parakeet as the most intelligent of all cagebirds. There is no question at all that parakeets will become very tame if trained correctly and that they can learn to talk—that is, to mimic human speech—and to do various tricks.

Parakeets are very interesting. Their chatter, beautiful colors and amusing antics will attract and hold the attention of anyone who sees them. They also make wonderful companions for older people, and children love them. In addition, they are inexpensive and easily cared for, and they will live for a long time if treated right.



Parakeets are native to Australia, where they live in large migratory flocks. The first description of *Melopsittacus undulatus*, the parakeet, was written by the naturalist Shaw in 1794. They were first bred in Germany in 1855.

*Opposite:*

The aboriginal name for the parakeet was "betcherugah," or pretty bird, and it is from the original native name that the name budgerigar (budgie for short), the other popular name for the parakeet *Melopsittacus undulatus*, was derived.



## HOW TO SELECT YOUR PARAKEET

Which budgie should you pick? What should its age and color be? The answers to these questions depend upon the reason for the purchase. If the bird is intended as a color ornament only, then age and sex play no decisive role. But if you also want your budgie to become tame and to learn to talk, then the choice has to be more exacting. Color is not important, nor is the sex always of influence, but age is very significant. Despite the fact that older budgies—several months old—often still become tame if you dedicate sufficient time to them, it is always preferable to buy a young bird. In most cases budgies reach the care of their final owner when five to eight weeks old.

Should you choose a male in preference to a female? As with most other bird species, male parakeets are preferred to females, but that does not mean that females do not become tame or learn how to talk.

Even an expert cannot be sure of the sex of younger specimens unless he is dealing with certain color strains of which all are females. Males are much more sought after than females. The only visible sexual character at the age of four weeks is the nostrils, of which those of the female show white rings that are absent on the male sex. The color of the nasal skin is still the same for both sexes, a light pink, while the characteristic blue of the adult males or the brown of the females is missing. Generally, the nostril skin of males shows a greater concentration of purple veins.

If the parakeet you bought as a male later on turns out to be a female, do not be too quick to blame the seller. Remember that sexing a parakeet at a very early age can be difficult.

Choice of the color is always a question of personal preference. Despite the multiplicity of shades, a natural-colored, light green budgie is undoubtedly a wonderful sight. Blue, too, which in this shade is only found on budgies, is very appreciated. Furthermore, you find degrees of shades in the different colors which are subdivided into light, medium, and dark. In green for instance light corresponds to light green, medium to dark green and dark to olive green. In blues there is a still larger division: sky blue, electric blue, mauve, violet sky blue, violet and violet mauve.

The violets are recent strains of which you should not expect a real violet color in the normal sense of the word. In this too there are different hues, of which those with a reddish sheen are most sought after. Anyway, violet is very striking and immediately stands out. For this



reason it is understandable that such birds fetch a higher price than the normal green and blue ones. Yellow and white wings are wonderful, and so are cream or cinnamon wings, which show very delicate pastel shades. We shall not discuss rainbow-hued birds since they are still rare among dealers, green and blue predominating on the market. After all, choice colors cannot be produced on assembly lines and demand great efforts on the part of the breeder. Before you succeed in breeding ten flawless yellow wings, you will have no less than 500 normal greens. This is the reason why the better pastel shades are found only in the hands of a few breeders and pet dealers who specialize in them. The exacting buyer will always value these exceptional budgerigars, as their color in itself is a joy to anyone's eyes.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A YOUNG PARAKEET

Naturally a nestling parakeet has not yet reached the size of a full-grown specimen. Its plumage is still a little paler than that of an adult. The dots on the throat, a distinctive feature of parakeets, are generally only sketchy on baby birds. Good standard specimens are quite ahead of the others at this age. The throat dots are already strikingly prominent on carefully bred parakeets. One big feature of a good parakeet is the shape of its head, which should be well-rounded and vigorous. The beak should show a wide base. Often one sees baby parakeets with small heads and a protruding vulture's beak. A sure sign of youth in parakeets is their large, black "baby" eyes, which still lack the white iris ring of the adults. Albinos and lutinos, though, have red eyes, and the harlequins—that is, the vari-colored ones—lack the eye ring even when growing old. The wave design on the head also permits you to recognize young specimens (excepting, of course, albinos and lutinos, which are pure white or pure yellow without any waves). On young specimens of all other colors the wave design covers the whole head down to the base of the beak; older birds do not show any waves on the forehead.

The upper part of the beak, too, generally shows another characteristic of the young parakeet, a black dot or stripe design which disappears when the birds reach the age of five to six weeks. Pay attention to vigorous, straight legs. Birds which spread the legs too wide or have them excessively thin (and possibly show overlong claws in addition) are unhealthy. Of the four claws, two are directed forward and two backward, a characteristic of all parrot-like birds.

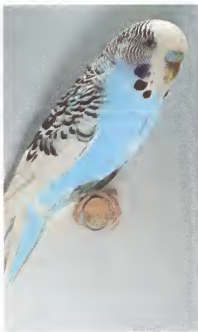
If you are offered a choice among several birds in a cage, some of them already sitting on a perch, the others squatting side by side or one upon the other in a corner, choose the latter, as they are younger. Why



Parakeets are now bred in many different colors. *Left:* a normal graywing skyblue. *Below left:* an opaline cinnamon-skyblue. *Below right:* a recessive pied skyblue.



A parakeet should have a rounded head and well set eyes, with its beak well tucked in. *Right: a normal gray. Below left: an Australian pied whiteflight cobalt. Below right: a whitewing cobalt.*



is this so? Again a natural phenomenon: parakeets are cave breeders (nest squatters) which as young specimens show the inclination to creep into dark corners. This behavior survives also in the cage. Don't expect them to climb on a perch immediately and show off their prettiness from there. If the bird hides in the food bowl or beneath it, this is only a sign of its tender age.

Before you take the little one home, make sure it is able to fly. "Runners" or "runts" are a very unwelcome phenomenon in breeding parakeets. These are the names given to specimens which lose most of their feathers shortly before leaving the nest and cannot fly but only run on the ground. Generally the longest feathers remain, causing the impression of an absolutely normal bird. Such specimens, which are unfit to fly, are often offered as especially tame, while what really happens is not tameness, but the inability to fly. The cause for this loss of feathers, called "French molting," is still uncertain. It is not a disease in the usual sense of the word. Probably we are facing a genetic defect which prevents the bird from building up its plumage.

Never choose parakeets which sit peacefully on their perches and do not bite, either. Generally this has nothing to do with any special tameness. The cause is disturbed health. Check the excrement of the bird. If it is thin and watery, leave the especially tame one where it is. Healthy parakeets show a lively behavior, their plumage is smooth, and when touched they generally screech and fight back with their beaks. To protect your fingers, catch the bird from above so that its throat comes to lie between your thumb and index finger, immobilizing its head.

### **BRINGING YOUR PARAKEET HOME**

Your pet shop has the cartons necessary for transporting your budgie home. In case of need even a simple paper bag with some air holes punched out will do.

It is probable that you already have the necessary cage. Otherwise your pet supplier has an extensive line of them available and will give you expert advice free. Naturally, the best cages are built expressly for parakeets and are characterized by toys and perches. The perches are there in order to give vent to the bird's natural desire to climb, as it prefers to climb around rather than to fly from perch to perch.

Do not offer any special toys to your pet during the first few days. Remember that it is a living being which needs a certain time to get used to its new environment. The most important point is: make sure that it knows how to feed alone. Together with the bird, buy some of the food to which it is accustomed, as this will make the change-over of



**A cage with a sliding removable tray at the bottom makes the changing and addition of gravel and grit a very simple chore.**

surroundings easier for it. Young budgies receive their food scattered on the bottom of the cage. The new bird could starve to death while having a full food bowl at its disposal because of its instinct of hiding in corners and not knowing enough to look in the bowl for its food. Empty seed hulls will show you that it has eaten.

### **HOUSING YOUR BUDGIE**

A good-sized wire cage is best for a bird. It is easy to keep clean and doesn't provide as many hiding places for mites as do other types of cages. The perches should be placed so that the bird has good flying room for exercise.

The cage should be located about six feet from the floor and out of any possible draft. The temperature should be kept as even as possible. Sudden drastic changes in the temperature may throw the bird into a bad molt. Never leave the bird in sunlight unless there is a shady place in the cage that your pet can perch in, if necessary.



Aside from the new color varieties which have been developed, new forms of parakeets have appeared. This form is called "feather duster."



**Parakeets are prolific breeders, but they should not be allowed to breed until they are one year old. These parakeets are feeding each other—feeding is typically exhibited before mating.**

As a rule budgies don't care much for a bath, but they do like to be sprinkled lightly with water. A light spraying quite often makes their feather texture better and smoother as well as helping to keep them cleaner. To have a clean, healthy bird, its cage, perches and play pen must be kept clean.

### FEEDING YOUR PARAKEET

You don't have to worry very much about providing the right type of food for your parakeet, as pet supply outlets carry a very wide selection of staple food products designed specifically for parakeets. In addition to the staple foods, a number of special "treat" foods also are available. You do, however, want to make sure that the food you provide for your bird is fresh, and you'll want to make sure that your pets are actually eating what you give them. Additionally, it is important that parakeets have a good supply of clean, fresh water available to them at all times. The water *must* be fresh and clean, so remember to change it often.



**Gravel papers are available in both round and rectangular shape to fit the bottoms of standard cages; removal of the old paper and placement of the new takes just a few seconds.**



**Toys for the parakeet should be positioned inside the cages so that they are easily accessible.**



Mineral substances, which are absolutely indispensable, are provided for in a special gravel and are available at any pet shop. These will also satisfy the bird's need for chewing and gnawing.

Germinated seeds are considered a delicacy. Sow a bit of the food grains in a flower pot, and within a few days you will be able to pull up young shoots which you serve to the bird together with the adhering soil. Budgerigars like to swallow soil and grit, the sand being vitally necessary to grind up food grains within their gizzards. An ear of half-ripe oats, too, is a good addition to the diet, as are all half-ripe seeds of grassy plants. Green food should also be served daily. A leaf of lettuce or spinach will be eaten with great relish, and the birds also like to gnaw on a piece of carrot, apple, banana or other fruit. Foods should always be varied, despite the fact that the main staple should consist of a good grade of seed. Tame birds will probably provide for variety on their own initiative, as they do not reject potatoes, bread, cake, meat or even sauerkraut. In other words, they eat whatever they can get. There are gourmets who specialize in favorite dishes which often escape completely from the normal area of nutritional needs. Practice moderation, otherwise the birds may easily swallow something detrimental to their health.

A parakeet nest can contain three to ten eggs, though five or six is the usual number. Eggs are laid every other day, and the eggs hatch in a similar manner. Here a hen with her brood awaits the hatching of her last egg.





## TAMING AND TEACHING TO TALK

Taming and teaching to talk are two different objectives, but they are related. In general, taming should represent a preparatory step to teaching to talk. Whether your bird is only tame, or whether additionally it becomes a proficient talker, depends on two important conditions.

1. It may depend on the bird itself. As has already been stressed, a parakeet is a live being with individual inclinations. Not all of them are equally "smart" or have the same talent as talking artists. Like all living things, they show large individual differences. You will often observe that one parakeet may become tame within a few days and learn to talk its first words very soon, without any particular training. Others remain shy, despite months of endeavor, and cannot be coaxed to pronounce a word, just their natural screeches. Such natural inclinations unfortunately cannot be foreseen just from the looks of a baby parakeet. Don't blame your supplier if you get caught with such an untalented bird.

2. The most important influence in training a parakeet to speak, however, is you, the teacher. *You* will always be the deciding factor. Slitting the tongue (this old barbaric superstition seems to crop up again and again) and especially prepared foods will not coax even one word from a bird if the trainer and teacher does not give it sufficient and effective attention. This is a fact that can never be overstressed. It represents the only key to success!

On the other hand, don't be misled by commercial advertising of nestlings from so-called "speech-talented" strains. Beware! Size, shape, and color can be influenced, but even in these the expert knows that the result from "**good x good**" is not always "**best**." This is still less the case with talking talent. The case is exactly the same as with schoolchildren: the teacher with special teaching skills will be able to get something out of even those children whom nature has not overly gifted with the talent to learn.

Taking this as a basis, we now start training the bird in the hope that it is gifted.

For this you have to have the bird completely alone in its cage, without any other specimens of its own kind in the same room or even within hearing range. Canaries or other cage birds disturb it very little, but the best bet is not to have the parakeet distracted by any bird voices at all. After it has learned to feed and is used to the cage, try to train it not to be frightened of your hand. Of course you will approach the cage cautiously. From now on serve the food only in its proper bowl. Now take the bowl out of the cage for a few hours, taking care that no grains of food are left on the bottom. Allow the bird to grow hungry. This

should happen within three or four hours if it has eaten before. To make sure, check its behavior. Then place some grains on your hand and offer them to the bird in its cage or in front of the cage door. If it is hungry, it will soon, though hesitantly, sit on your hand and eat the food, especially if you utter some soothing sounds. With this you have accomplished the first and most important step. The more frequently you get your pet on your hand, the more trusting it becomes. It is best to do the feeding within the cage so that the bird gets used to searching for food there. This has the added advantage that later, when flying around free, it will eagerly return to the cage of its own free will. After the bird has eaten its fill, especially in the evening when it is also sleepy, is the moment for further training.

For this too we make use of a natural instinct of parakeets: they like to scratch each other. If you take a match or something similar and lightly stroke the head and cheek feathers down to the skin, the pet will soon hold its head slanted and close its eyes out of pure enjoyment. Also make use of its climbing instinct and alternately hold your left and right index fingers before its breast. It will soon start to like this "escalator."

Always keep some seed handy and use caressing words, of which no one lacks a good supply. Only the "o" sound does not seem to please parakeets very much, unlike the larger parrots, which love to utter them. Hissing sounds are especially well reproduced by parakeets. As to talking itself, we have to state the following: *Don't expect too much.* All sounds are rendered in a falsetto voice, and in many cases they are understandable only to the trainer or to persons who listen to the pet every day. In this, too, it is the exception which confirms the rule. Comparisons may be made with babies who start to talk. Their language, too, is generally understood by the respective family only. It is equally understandable, though, that the whole family boasts of baby's gift for talking, and strangers have to listen very carefully if they want to understand anything. It is advisable to drill your student in a steady, calm voice, teaching it a complete sentence like: "I am Polly." Other words will frequently be added automatically.

"How long will my parakeet need to learn to talk?" The only reply is: "That depends upon you. The more attention you give it, the sooner it will talk." This is the reason why lonely persons and others who have the time to give their birds continuous attention frequently register such a great success.

In many cases, a parakeet's vocabulary is not limited to just a few words. Often the little bird shows considerable "memory" and may even know its returning master as soon as he inserts his key in the keyhole. In imitating all kinds of noises, too, parakeets are real artists. A



Some of these parakeets are fully feathered and ready to leave the nest.

*Opposite:*  
Yellow parakeets are one of the oldest color varieties. They were first raised in the late 1800's.



whistle, the creaking of a door, the chirping of sparrows, a barking dog and the mating calls and songs of other cage birds can all be learned. Often the bird surprises you with new word combinations it has learned by itself.

It is not only by talking, but also by their funny behavior that parakeets brighten our days, and of this there would be much to tell. For instance, they carry around small objects, rolling them over the whole table and deliberately dropping them over the edge to the floor. Matches are well-liked but highly dangerous toys. Many parakeets like to creep through a cardboard tube, and they like to perch on eyeglasses when talking with their master and friend.

This tendency to play, which originates from the natural gregariousness of parakeets, may be met halfway by giving the birds some of the toys available in pet shops. Little bells, bob-up kellys, plastic birds, little ladders, ferris wheels and swings are all well-liked. The birds especially enjoy themselves in front of a mirror, to which they love to show off their vocabulary.

The first free flight in the room will probably be used to land on a curtain rod or some other elevated point. It would be absolutely wrong to chase the just-tamed parakeet from there, especially with a broom or dusting cloth. This will only make the bird shy and induce it to fly to some other higher, protected perch. Experienced bird fanciers are prepared for such cases. They keep a 5-foot-long pole at hand, at the upper end of which there is a finger-long twig that branches off. (This is easily cut from a bush or made from a bamboo rod.) Hold the cross twig before the parakeet's breast and, since it has already learned to climb onto your finger, it will soon be sitting on the pole. Now place the bird slowly in front of the cage. Since it knows that that is the place where its food is found, it will willingly go in. The trainer's head, too, is a well-liked landing spot. It is preferable, though, to train your pet to perch on your shoulder. Dodge it quickly when it aims for your head, and it will soon see that such efforts are in vain.

Never catch your parakeet "by force," and never try to catch it with your hand while in flight. This is not conducive to tameness. If you really have to catch it because you cannot get it to enter the cage by any other means, it is best to wait for the evening. Turn off the light, approach the bird carefully and catch it by throwing a very light towel over it. It will often bite you with all its might, but a pair of light gloves is sufficient protection.

In some cases you will be able to buy ready-tamed and talking parakeets. These too need a domestication period. Such birds will usually keep quiet during the first few days after moving. The same



disappointment will be experienced when you have visitors and want to show off your feathered artist. In most cases it will be just then that it hides its talents. Once more you see that a bird is no mechanical gadget with a knob for turning it on. Your capacity to understand its feelings, to form a personal relationship with it and to consider it a live being with a will of its own are prerequisites for its talking.

### SPEECH TRAINING

You can only make use of all the willingness to learn and the talent for talking that your bird possesses if you give it systematic and deliberate speech training. The initial lessons are always decisive. Start training your parakeet as soon as possible, while the bird still sits in its cage and is not yet permitted to fly around free. It is essential that the bird be rid of its shyness towards its trainer. All efforts at training will be a complete failure if the parakeet is still unfamiliar with its environment and possibly even still flutters wildly around its cage. If that is the case, leave it in peace for a few days or cover the cage in part with a cloth in order to help it to get familiarized more quickly. This will rarely fail to help, unless your bird is an older specimen which up to this time has lived in a large bird house.

Teaching is not limited to any definite time, and you will soon discover when your student is especially well-disposed toward learning. At first speak only *one* word to it, usually its name. This generally is an easy and short word anyway. If not, make it so. Just one person is better for teaching than several members of a family who may possibly even speak to the parakeet all at the same time or use different words.

After the bird has mastered a certain vocabulary, even a large family will not be able to disturb the teaching. Quite to the contrary; *it will help!* Experience shows that a great number of voices incites the bird to imitate or mock them. *During the first lessons*, though, only one person should take care of the student, and this one should do it as frequently as possible. Only after the pupil pronounces a word understandably is the moment right to add the next word to the list. Do not feel tempted to cram whole sentences into a bird or to want to teach it the maximum vocabulary in the minimum time. A good teacher has patience, understanding, calmness and a little "bird" sense.

During training, the bird's attention should not be diverted by anything. For this reason it is not advisable to try to train several nestlings together. Leave such experiments to experts in the field. Birds that already have learned to talk cannot be used as teachers of young ones, as generally just the opposite will happen. The learned one takes again to its natural sounds and will lose its whole vocabulary if the two birds re-



New color varieties are being developed all of the time. *Left:* Australian dominant pied opaline gray-green. *Below left:* an opaline gray-green. *Below right:* an olive-green.



The first yellow-faced  
parakeets were bred in 1937.  
*Right:* a yellow-face graywing.  
*Below left:* a yellowwing dark  
green. *Below right:* a normal  
cinnamon graywing.



main together for a long period of time.

Always pronounce the words you want to teach your parakeet in the same pitch. Whether this is high or low is irrelevant, and so is whether a man, woman, or child acts as teacher. Only an even pitch and clear pronunciation are important. In complete sentences the words should always be spoken *clearly* and *separately*. This will make the bird's rendering of all of them better. Never forget that, despite all its "talent," its talking is nothing more than a rattling off of sounds. The clearer and more distinctly these are pronounced initially to the bird, the greater will be your joy over your pupil's talking later on.

As soon as the parakeet has mastered its first words and sentences, the teacher may consider the game as won. Never commit the error, at this stage, of leaving the bird to its own devices. It is true that it will pick up many sounds and sentence patterns, but planned teaching and training will increase its gift. Owing to its tameness, which is definitely related to its speech training, the parakeet will soon perch on the finger of its master or caretaker and seemingly read the words from his or her mouth. A reward of a leaf of lettuce or some similar delicacy will certainly enhance its willingness to learn. With time the unilateral lessons develop into a social mutual talk which will please not only the trainer but the whole household and, last but not least, the bird, too.

### **BAD TRAITS OF TAMED PARAKEETS**

Where there is light, there certainly is shadow. This applies to parakeets, too. The bird's free flight in the room and its instinct to play will often anger humans. There are "artists" who specialize in tearing up curtains or in chewing up carpets and rugs. Even important documents from your desk may fall victim to your parakeet's chewing. If you happen to own a tame female, she may often chew holes into walls and upholstery during the nesting season, owing to her instinct for building a nest. Potted plants are a very special goal. Rubber trees, ferns, clinging vines and others often bear the scars of a parakeet's visit for years. If you own valuable plants, you may be forced to keep your bird in its cage.

This is not always the case with other birds. Often the piercing screech of the parakeet, which it utters especially when hearing the voices of sparrows, is not exactly a treat to human ears. Parakeets lose their tameness very quickly if given a partner of their own kind. Their former attraction for humans will now be concentrated exclusively on the other bird.

**Birds love to bathe, and specially designed bath compartments can be attached to the outside of the cage so that they fit over the door; the bird has access to the compartment, but the cage stays free of water.**



### **DANGERS TO WHICH PARAKEETS ARE SUBJECT**

Its tameness often becomes the parakeet's undoing. Chewing on plants and other objects frequently leads to intestinal infections, diseases and even poisoning.

The final destiny of many tame birds is characterized by the word "escaped." Never permit free flight while windows are open. Even if this goes well a number of times, some day your pet will escape. It may, however, stay around for a while if it hears the call of its fellow-parakeets. Bringing the familiar cage into its field of sight may prove to be a good bait for getting it back. You may also succeed in catching some escapees by means of the previously described pole. The best time for this is during twilight, as then the parakeet will sit quietly. Parakeets are able to survive in freedom for weeks during summer and spring when plenty of greens and grains are available. If they are able to state their name and address, this may prove an efficient means for their



To facilitate training, some people clip the flight feathers on the wing. The parakeet will then not be able to fly away and will stay on your finger. If done properly, clipping feathers is not painful to the bird, and the feathers grow back—but don't attempt feather clipping unless you're *sure* you know what you're doing. If in doubt, obtain an expert's help.

*Opposite:*

Cobalt blue parakeets were not bred until this century. Shortly after they appeared, it was reported that some people paid a thousand dollars for birds of this color.



return to the familiar home. In many cases it is only after you have already left the house that you notice that "Polly" has followed you, sitting peaceably on your head but determined to use its wings. (Generally you will not notice this if you wear a hat, for which reason you should train your pet from youth on to perch on your shoulders only).

Many a bird has met its end on hot stoves, in filled milk pots or in the mouth of "Rover" or "Kitty." Be careful not to step on it when it is on the floor or to squash it when closing a door. You see, your little parakeet always remains a baby and needs special care.

## REMEDIES

If a young, healthy bird is well cared for, there is very little need for remedies or medicine. Parakeets if kept healthy will live for many years. Some of the commonest troubles that could occur are listed below.

**Colds:** Colds are generally caused by exposing the bird to a draft. He can withstand cold temperatures, but never a draft. He'll puff up, partially close his eyes, ruffle his feathers and appear listless. Often he'll stand on one leg. A severe cold will even cause his eyes to darken noticeably; this disappears as the cold gets better. Keep your parakeet in warm, high temperatures of 85 to 90°F., 24 hours a day. Give him tepid, fresh water only. Let him rest in his cage. Bird vitamin tonics are a big help.

**Constipation:** Listlessness along with few, but hard droppings is the indication. Give him more greens in his diet. A drop or two of mineral oil fed with a medicine dropper will also help. Always be sure the oil is at the tip of the dropper so as not to force air into the bird. Exercise will help too.

**Diarrhea:** He'll be listless, his feathers will ruffle, and he'll soil his vent feathers with loose droppings. Keep him warm. Eliminate all greens from his diet. Commercially prepared oats and groats along with boiled milk will help straighten him out.

**Mites:** Attack on two fronts. Kill the parasites on the bird and exterminate them from the cage. Remove him from the cage and apply one of the many good powders that are on the market. Apply the powder directly to the bird's body, especially under the wings, and work it well into the feathers. Mite sprays are also effective and easier to use since they eliminate the necessity of holding the bird. For the cage use one of the mite powders or sprays. Clean the cage with boiling water and then disinfect it. Make sure that it is thoroughly dry before returning the bird to it. Replace all perches with new ones.





Conditioning food will help your bird retain its vigor and good health.

**Pneumonia:** A parakeet with pneumonia will exhibit all the symptoms of a cold as well as wheezing and gasping for breath. Keep him very warm around-the-clock (about 85°F.). Provide the same treatment as for colds.

**Toe nails:** If your keet is accustomed to being held in your hand, this presents little difficulty. Nails grow rapidly, and if his don't stay trimmed through abrasive action, they'll have to be cut. Hold the bird firmly but gently, extending each claw against the light so that you can see the little vein—the "quick"—that runs inside.

**Feather Plucking:** Occasionally a bird may pluck its own feathers, leaving a bald spot. This is caused by wrong feeding or nervousness. Removing the bird to a quieter room at night might stop the habit.

A parakeet molts a few feathers at a time; there is no regular molting season for them as there is for a canary or various other birds. Any parakeet works its feathers a lot, cleaning them and removing the little disk that surrounds the new feathers coming in. The small flakes that fall to the floor of the cage are from these disks.



**Provide your parakeet with affectionate care, a good diet and comfortable housing. Under these circumstances you will find it easier to gain your bird's trust, and the bird will be easier to tame and train.**



Learning about

# PARAKEETS/ BUDGIES



**COLORFUL,**  
★  
**PRACTICAL,**  
★  
**EASY  
TO  
READ!**

Easy to read and easy to learn from, this highly colorful good book has been designed to fit the needs of beginners. Readers don't need any previous experience to be able to understand and benefit from its step-by-step instructions and valuable specific tips. Handsomely illustrated throughout (mostly with exciting full-color photos), this book **SHOWS** as well as tells what beginners want and need to know.

